

# Fit For Life

How "lifetime sports" can  
be the best route to a longer,  
happier and healthier life



This brochure, and its accompanying material, is brought to you in the interests of more sports participation and better health by

Your Blue Cross Plan

and

The President's Council on Physical  
Fitness and Sports

## The Real Need for Exercise – Throughout Life

After 20 years of national campaigns urging physical fitness, fewer than half of adult Americans participate in sport or get any exercise beyond whatever is required by their work. And in today's automated and computerized offices and factories, precious few jobs involve any real exercise.

Among people who do exercise regularly, or say they do, most list walking as their only activity.

The problem can be attributed in part to plain old inertia, plus fierce and attractive competition from passive forms of entertainment.

But the fact that most people don't get sports instruction is also a factor. A recent survey disclosed that only one of five adults has had swimming lessons. Bowling is the only other sport in which as many as 10 per cent of the people have had formal instruction.

Organized competitive sports can't meet the need. That same survey showed that 60 per cent of adult women and 38 per cent of adult men have never taken part in either interscholastic or intramural sport. And if they had, it would have been 10, 20 or 30 years ago. You can't go on playing varsity football all your life.

The result is a lethargic, mostly inactive population either watching television or driving to a stadium to watch other people exercise.

This massive inactivity, combined with over-eating, excessive smoking and other abuse recently prompted the U.S. Public Health Service to state that, "Our number one health problem is the way we live."



## How You Can Help

You already know all of those things. One of the reasons you're in physical education most likely is that you're convinced of sport's rewards. You probably spend a large part of your time trying to get more people to appreciate the value of sports and exercise.

This pamphlet, and the material with it, is designed to make your job easier by giving you more information that you can share with others; and by showing you how the Presidential Sports Award program can be used to reinforce your efforts. More about the Awards program later.



As a teacher, you know that many of life's patterns are firmly fixed during the first few years of life. That's especially true of the kind and amount of food we eat and the way we spend our leisure time.

Research shows that persons who have good – emphasize that word "good" – experiences in physical education and sports are two or three times more likely to be active adults.

Such findings emphasize the importance of good sports instruction in the schools: not just to build a team for the school this year; not just to occupy 50 minutes or an hour of each student's time every day; but to establish patterns of activity that students can follow right into adulthood.

## School Activities as a Foundation

The picture isn't all dark, of course. There are occasional bright lights. The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education and Recreation estimates that 75 per cent of secondary schools now provide some instruction in "lifetime sports" skills – the kind that can stay with the student all of his or her life.

Graduates of these broader programs are helping to fuel the rapidly growing sports boom; and they probably are mostly responsible for the popularity of back-packing, rock-climbing, cycle touring, white-water canoeing and other "new" sports.

An outstanding example of what can be done in schools is the San Rafael (California) High School, which was featured in an article in *Sports Illustrated*. As the author explained:

"It has the country's most celebrated high school physical education program, one that offers 45 electives ranging from football to Frisbee, from team handball to tumbling, from *tai chi chuan* to boxing to yoga to self-defense . . . San Rafael High is accomplishing what every school would like to: not only is it offering the athletically gifted child a wide choice of activities, it is turning would-be spectators into athletes.

"Most students are required to take one 55-minute P.E. course a day. In the ninth grade there is a core program in which pupils learn basic team games, develop coordination and agility through individual sports, and find out about their bodily capabilities through tests. Electives start in the 10th grade. There are semester-long courses in gymnastics, rock-climbing, sailing, and modern dance, and six-week programs in other areas.

"The most dramatic successes often have been with pupils who had been considered unathletic."

An important point is that San Rafael High broadened its athletic program with few extra expenditures. (The 45-sport budget is \$6,000.) The goal was to in-

volve more students, not to spend more money. "We try to be creative," said the school's P.E. director, noting that they "begged, borrowed," were given some equipment and shared other, more expensive material with a neighboring high school.

## Involve Your Students AND Your Community

Any school – including yours – can strengthen its lifetime sports program by carefully using all of the resources available to it. Here are some suggestions that have worked all across the country:



- ▶ Share scarce equipment and teaching knowledge with other schools. Avoid expensive duplication.
- ▶ Develop programs in cooperation with park and recreation departments, sports clubs, Ys, churches and others. Share instructional talent and physical resources.
- ▶ Encourage students to form clubs around their interests in cycling, sailing, rock-climbing, hiking, SCUBA diving and other non-team sports.
- ▶ Capitalize on the special skills of students. A surprising number will have had instruction and experience in sports not usually included in the school program.
- ▶ Take advantage of special features of your area, such as mountains, lakes or rivers, ski areas, wilderness trails and campgrounds.





### **Preparing for a life of good sport – and good health**

A relatively high level of physical fitness is essential to the mastery and enjoyment of sports. Without strength, staying power, and agility, it is impossible either to become generally skilled or to apply strength successfully.

Many of your students probably are under the impression that they can get in shape to play a game simply by practicing it, but that is a delusion. All good athletes know this. That's why they put themselves through rigorous conditioning and training programs before attempting to participate. A good rule to remember is this: "You don't get fit by playing; you get fit to play."

We believe every physical education program should include, in addition to skilled instruction, a strong emphasis on

physical fitness. Each period should provide each student a complete workout, with good balance between endurance, strength, and flexibility exercises.

The most important activity of all, of course, is running. It is a basic skill in most of our popular participant sports and it's also a good way to develop cardiovascular endurance.

We know that regular, vigorous exercise during the growing years is essential to proper physical development and that you can lay the foundation for vigorous good health throughout life. It's also a starting point for anyone who truly wants to learn to enjoy sports.



### **Presidential Awards as an Incentive**

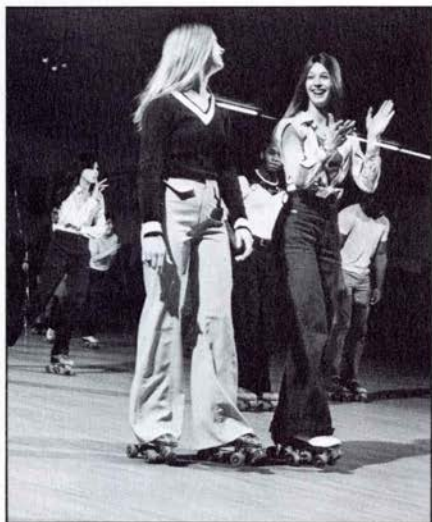
Remember you are trying to develop in your students interest in one or more sports or activities that they can continue throughout their lives.

But you have to get them started. Like the old joke about hitting the mule in the head with a club, you first have to get their attention.

The Presidential Sports Award program is a good way to do that.

The program was established in 1972 to encourage adults to participate regularly in sports. Because of heavy demand, the eligibility age was lowered to 15, and high schools were quick to adapt the program for their own use.

Today the Presidential Award fills the role of the traditional varsity letter in many intramural and club sports programs. The varsity letter is available to





few students; the Presidential Award is available to just about anyone who will go after it.

The Award is given for regular participation rather than outstanding performance. Persistence wins a Presidential Sports Award regardless of ability. And no one has to "beat" anyone else to win it.

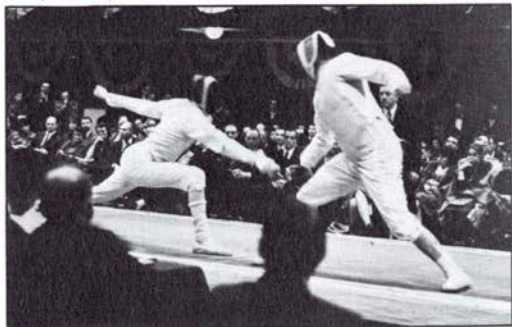
Also, the Award contributes to one of your major objectives: to establish the habit of regular participation. The qualifying standards for most of the 40-plus Award sports have been designed to require at least 50 hours of participation. The idea is that if someone walks or rides a bike or swims or rides a horse for 50 hours, he or she will keep it up as a regular activity.

The Award confers the kind of high-level recognition that previously has been reserved for special athletes, and

provides ready-made "lesson plans" developed by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports in cooperation with more than 50 national associations and sports governing bodies.

Students like the colorful Award emblem and pin and the certificate bearing the President's seal. And so do adults. Hundreds of thousands of Awards have been presented, to people of all ages and in all walks of life.

The Award items are tangible recognition of the wearer's achievements and identify him or her as a member of the growing army of people who are forsaking the spectator's role for active participation.



Many young people who first become acquainted with the Award program in high school continue to participate actively after graduation. And that's the whole idea.

### The Reasons For It All

Blue Cross Plans share with the President's Council a strong belief in the value of regular sports participation. Few things are as good for the body or the spirit as a lively set of tennis, a brisk swim or an outing on a boat or a bicycle. Sports skills acquired early in life and kept sharp by constant use can be a valuable source of pleasure and of better health.

A study on longevity, made in California, found by following the health records of 7,000 people for several years that seven "good living habits" can extend







life expectancy by as much as 11 years for men and seven years for women.

They are:

- ▶ EXERCISE REGULARLY.
- ▶ Get the right amount of sleep.
- ▶ Eat a good breakfast.
- ▶ Eat three meals a day at regular times and avoid snacks.
- ▶ Control weight.
- ▶ Drink moderately or not at all.
- ▶ Don't smoke cigarettes.

Most health experts agree that lack of exercise contributes to many of the degenerative diseases that afflict so many middle-aged and older persons. The conclusion is inescapable, but still holds out much hope: To a surprising extent, our own actions are responsible for the kind of health we have – good or bad.

If that's true, and nearly all medical authorities agree that it is, we can improve



our health significantly by improving our personal habits.

That, of course, is easier said than done.

Success will require the best efforts of the home, the school and all other institutions in our society.

Go to it!



The Presidential Sports Award is priced at \$4, payable by check or money order with the application.

However, if orders for 25 or more Awards are submitted by the same source (a school or organization, for example), the price is reduced to \$3 each.

The Sports Award program is an official activity of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, but no tax money is involved. The program is self-supporting. Fees received from Award recipients pay all program expenses, including the costs of the Awards themselves.

